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Alberta

MANPOWER ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Alberta

MANPOWER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
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May 26th, 1982

Hon. James D. Horsman
Minister
Advanced Education and Manpower

Sir:

I have the honour to submit the First Annual Report of the Manpower Advisory Council for the year ending November, 1981.

Respectfully submitted,

T.C. Donnelly
Chairman

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN

It has been both a pleasure and honour to serve as Chairman of the Alberta Manpower Advisory Council during the past two years.

It is the intention of the Manpower Advisory Council — having established our priorities — to work closely with all sectors in an effort to eliminate the manpower supply-demand imbalances and problems we all face.

As Chairman of the Manpower Advisory Council, I look forward to increased co-operation with industry, labour and provincial educational bodies in the common goal of creating jobs and filling the vacancies through training and re-training. Albertans should be given every opportunity to participate fully in the economic prosperity of this province.

T. C. Donnelly
Chairman,
Manpower Advisory Council

MANPOWER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS 1981

Chairman

Tom C. Donnelly
President
Barber Industries
Calgary

Vice Chairman

Dr. G.S.H. (Gerry) Lock
Dean, Interdisciplinary Studies
University of Alberta
Edmonton

Robert G. Donlevy
Vice President
William Mercer Limited
Calgary

Diane I. Hall
Senior Vice President
NOVA, An Alberta Corporation
Calgary

J. Clayton Spence
Barrister and Solicitor
Fort McMurray

David H. Fagan
Business Manager and Secretary Treasurer
Boilermakers Union, Local 146
Edmonton

Clayton Kennedy
Businessman
Rocky Mountain House

FIRST REPORT OF THE MANPOWER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Introduction and General Objectives

It is generally acknowledged that there exists in Canada a serious shortage of technical and professional expertise which will reach critical proportions between now and 1985.

This situation is particularly serious in western Canada, where the enormous growth and development anticipated over the next decade will create unprecedented demands for professional and technical services, including educational and training programs (at both high school and university/vocational training levels).

To address these problems the Government of Alberta established the Manpower Advisory Council in November 1977 — as enpowered by the 1976 Manpower Development Act.

Under this Statute, the purpose of the Manpower Advisory Council can be summarized as being to liaise closely with all sectors of industry and labour in the Province regarding the current and future manpower requirements of Alberta, and to advise the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower.

To achieve this purpose, the Council was authorized to meet at least five times in any given year; and to consider representation from all interested parties.

Council members represent all areas of the industrial community; management, unions, academic, and service industry personnel have a voice. While the Council is given staff support by officials from Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower, it reports directly to the Minister, rather than through the department.

Activities of the Council during 1981

In January 1981, a two-day workshop was organized at which candid presentations from business, industry and the unions were heard by the Council. Various points of view were presented, and the following points emerged as being of principal concern:

- Current federal immigration regulations and procedures present a substantial barrier to employers seeking skilled staff from outside Canada.
- Difficulties are encountered in recruitment of personnel to the province, even when there is a surplus in other parts of the country.
- There is a chronic shortage of manpower in skilled trades and selected professions.
- Current apprenticeship programs which produce more than 25 per cent of the apprentices in Canada still have difficulty in meeting the demand for skilled personnel, particularly in the industrial sectors.
- More specific training facilities are required.
- In-house training programs do not satisfy the training and development requirements within those industries. It is felt that this state of affairs is due mainly to insufficient awareness of the existence of such programs.

The following suggestions were received by the Council, and will be reviewed as to their feasibility and application during the coming year.

Future Remedies - Short-term

- Short-term training programs should be examined as a possible supplement to current four-year apprenticeship schemes.
- The Federal Government should be approached with a view to allowing "bulk" immigrant recruitment approval. The current maximum of nine persons in any one category at any one time is simply not sufficient to meet the current and early forecast requirements. Additionally, the immigration process should be speeded up; the present six to eight month time lapse is clearly too long.
- Short-course training programs, with the active participation of manufacturers, should be considered for private and public institutions. The emerging computer/data processing fields provide an ideal example where such courses could be usefully utilized.

Future Remedies - Long-term

- Company-sponsored and operated training programs, meeting Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower standards, should continue to be considered. It is felt that this is one way in which the future apprenticeship supply requirements of the province can be met.
- Employers should consider retraining their current pools of skilled labour. Some trades are heavily "over-loaded" with skilled personnel, who would require comparatively little time to re-qualify in one of the currently "under-populated" trades. Employees should receive encouragement and incentive to seek new challenges and opportunities.
- With the Minister's encouragement, the Alberta Manpower Advisory Council is organizing symposia to deal specifically with the problems of manpower planning. It is felt that the exchange of ideas from such forums could result in the development of possible solutions to the problems.

Additional Council Concerns

The Council has identified a problem with retention and successful assimilation of skilled personnel once they have been recruited. This problem is particularly acute with persons recruited from overseas.

Although there is usually no shortage of applicants for positions in Canada, as evidenced by the experience of companies who have undertaken recruitment drives, the selection of suitable overseas candidates often proves much more difficult and costly than expected. The long-term success rates of these drives have been disappointingly low.

Many of those hired need an unnecessarily long period to adjust to Canadian life (during which time they are less productive members of a company's workforce), while many others return home after only a brief period.

Nor is this problem solely one of overseas' immigrants. The lifestyle in western Canada is different from that experienced in other parts of Canada. Families up-rooting themselves from other areas experience many similar problems, and often prefer to return to familiar surroundings.

It is felt that this unacceptably high settlement failure rate is, in large measure, directly attributable to inadequate preparation for the differences in lifestyle. One method to combat these difficulties is to improve the standard of education offered to these potential immigrants by using various educational tools, including audio visual aids, which would depict lifestyles without the present travelogue format. Some immigrants are not aware of the regional and language differences in such a vast country as Canada.

In the next year, the Manpower Advisory Council wishes to investigate:

- more liaison with business, industry and the unions, through greater publicity of the Council's existence, to achieve the free flow of ideas and information designed to solve common problems;
- liaison with more government departments;
- greater liaison with provincial educational institutions; and
- mobility of the current work force.

Conclusion

The early activities of any organization include creating an environment within which to operate, investigating the problems facing those the group seeks to assist, and planning the means by which these problems can be solved.

This the Manpower Advisory Council has accomplished. The members look forward to a year of even greater activity in close co-operation with those we seek to help — business, industry and labour. Their participation is vital if Alberta is to succeed in extending new frontiers for Canada.

November 1981.